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Cradle of Castes in Kashmir

(From Medieval Period to Present Day)

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ABSTRACT

Caste in Kashmiri language is known as *Kram* and there is a long list of krams in Kashmir. During Ancient Kashmir, the inhabitants were mostly Hindus followed by Buddhist and Jains. The society was divided into four castes which was a direct inspiration from Indian society but the caste system was not rigid. With the influx of muslim divines from the neighboring countries, large number of hindus got converted to Islam except the Brahmans. After the process of proselytization castes got mixed and there was the emergence of new castes. These new castes were both indigenous and foreign. Every caste has a detailed history with a sound background. Generally speaking castes in Kashmir were mainly of two types- caste by origin and castes by occupation which will be discussed in the paper at length. In this paper an attempt has been made to understand the galaxy of castes and their lineage in Kashmir. The paper is also an endeavor to see the influence of foreign castes of Muslim divines who visited Kashmir in fourteenth century A.D. Furthermore, the amalgamation of the castes and their relevance in the social structure would be realized.

Keywords: Kram, Kashmir, caste, muslim, sultans, medieval.

1. INTRODUCTION

The caste or a practice common in Kashmir perhaps of older origin is of giving a *Kram* (caste), a nickname, which is added to the original name by reason of man's special calling, or because of some special circumstance which has occurred to him. *Kram*or caste was usually associated with the profession.[1]The people of medieval Kashmir were grouped into different classes mainly based on racial, religious, social and economic factors. They were both of indigenous and of foreign origin, ranging from foreign aristocratic

[1] Knowles J.H., *A Dictionary of Kashmiri Proverbs and Sayings*, (Kashmir, 1885), p.115

classes down to the peasantry.[2]The concept of four castes as elsewhere in India like Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra[3] in ancient Kashmir were not altogether unknown but under some fanatic sultans of Kashmir, almost all sections of castes, excluding few Brahmin families gave up their castes and willingly or unwillingly embraced Islam.[4]

The present paper has been discussed in the light of Kalhana's *Rajtarangni*, Srivara's *Rajtarangini* (Srivara continued with the same book) and Lawrence's *The Valley of Kashmir*. Kalhana has written a wonderful account on the history of Kashmir during the twelfth century. He had very well discussed the social relationships particularly the castes of Kashmir. Srivara had continued the legacy of Kalhana's history writing and bring into fore all the historical and political developments of his time. So far as Kalhana is concerned, he had acted as the settlement officer of Kashmir during 1889 and had collected some basic information of rural and urban areas which the earlier works had neglected. His facts and figures regarding rural villages had never been the part of history before. He also had given a vivid picture of the origin and evolution castes in Kashmir.

In medieval Kashmir the population mainly comprised of Hindu, Buddhist or Jain. With the influx of muslim divines and philosophers from Persia and central Asia in the first quarter of the fourteenth century and after, a material change was brought about in the composition of the population. There was an intimate relationship between the new converts to Islam and foreign theologians. With the exception of some Brahmins all other castes slowly and gradually accepted Islam and the result was that only Brahman caste among the Hindus survived. The Brahmans were divided into two sub-castes of *Karkuns* and *Bashya-Bhatts*. *Karkuns* were those who studied Persia and entered Govt. services from the time of Zain-ul-Abidin onwards, but those who clung to their old traditions were known as *Bashya-Bhatts*.[5]

Srivara has mentioned that during the time of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin (1420-70), we cannot establish the fact of four traditional castes of Hindus during medieval Kashmir. But there are references of the existence of various low castes in Kashmir during the medieval period like Dombas, Kiratas, Chandalas and Nisadas**.** Curiously enough we do not have sufficient evidence of various intermediary castes as were found in other parts of India.[6] Many of the converts to Islam, however, continued to bear their old surnames. Kauls, Bhatts, Mantus, Ganais, Aitus, Rainas and Pundits were converts from the *Brahman* caste, where as*Dars*, *Magreys*, *Rathors*, *Thakors*, *Nayaks*, *Lons*, *Chaks* came from that of the *Kshatriyas*. They retained their old caste rules and even their functions and intermarriages between the different groups were exceptions rather than the rule. The activities of the *Magres*, *Rainas*, *Chaks* and *Dars* bear close resemblance to those of the feudal lords of the later Hindu period.[7]

There were some other forms of castes as well like prestigious krams, religious, secular, traditional and lower caste krams. The ruling elite and muslim religious preachers possess some fascinating krams which

2 Wani,Nizam-ud-din, *Muslim Rule in Kashmir (1554 A.D to 1586 A.D*, (New Delhi, Repr. 1993), p. 190; see also Kaul, Anand, *The Kashmiri Pandit*, (Calcutta 1924), p. 44.

3 Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari,* Trans. Colonel H.S Jarrett, vol. III, (Calcutta, 1978), p. 126.

4 M.H. Alexender, *Tuzuk-i-Jahagiri*, trans. Alexender Rogers, (London, 1909), P 149-50; See also Kapoor M. L., *A History of Medieval Kashmir,* 1320-1586 A D, (Jammu, 1971), p 209.

5 Bamzai, P N K., *A History of Kashmir*, (Delhi, 1962), p. 467; see also Knowles, *A Dctionary of Kashmiri proverbs and sayings,* pp. 23, 115, 117.

6 Wani, Nizam-ud-din, *Muslim Rule in Kashmir (1554 A.D to 1586) A.D*, p. 187.

7 Lawrence, Walter, *The Valley of Kashmir*, (Srinagar, 2005), p. 306.

were later on adopted by their followers. These people were known for their castes, although castes did not have much impact on the life of the people. There were inter-caste marriages and people hardly bothered about that but it is very interesting to know the social background of castes in Kashmir.

Hindu society in ancient Kashmir was generally recognized on caste basis. In such a society Brahmins enjoyed a place of privilege and respect.[8] But during the muslim rule in Kashmir we see that the position of Brahmins deteriorated owing to the massive drive of proselytization and Brahmins were particularly the target. After the death of Sultan Zain-ul-abidin who gave a soothing touch to the Brahmins of Kashmir occupying a privileged status in the muslim polity. Chaks were however, liberal to recognize the existence of *Zimis* and under their rule Brahmins lived in dignity and comfort. [9] Apart from the Brahmins i.e., *Kashmiri Pandits*, there was a small community of *Bohras* among the Hindus of the valley. They are descended from the *Khatri* stock, whose principal business is trade and shopkeeping.[10] Chronicles have no mention of Rajput community during the period of Chaks. Rajputs were actually the soldiers. Jonaraja and Srivara had mentioned that Rajputs were the military men under Sultan Zain-ul-abidin. Possibly either they lost their military importance or rendered it as unidentified muslim converts.[11]

Low Castes: The low caste people as existing before the Chak period were the *Dombas*, *Chandalas*, *Kiratas Nisadas*. As far as Dombas are concerned, they have been referred as caste of menials by Kalhana. He has also sometimes associated them with *Chandalas* and *Svapakas* (dog eaters). These people were treated with much contempt and naturally their social disabilities forced them to earn their livelihood by committing theft and sometimes by singing and dancing.[12]About the *Kiratas*, these were also the low caste meant like *dombas* and *Chandalas* and lived in forests. Kalhana had mentioned their position in ancient Kashmir as fierce and cruel fighters who also acted as royal guards and watchmen.[13]Alberuni has mentioned that the *Chandalas* of Northern India earned their livelihood by killing the persons sentenced to death by the judicial authority. This may have been the case with Kashmiri *Chandalas* who were universally hated. Srivara writes that Kiratas were associated with the performance of the funeral rites of hindus, however they were punished by Sultan Zain-ul-abidinon such act. The *Nisadas* were the aboriginal tribes of Kashmir, with a very low status in ancient society but did not appear during the Chak period.[14]

Another social group of the society was the *Watal* caste who are said to perform the unclean in the towns and the country. They also supply the musicians and the dancing girls, whose beauty and ability to sing and dance are renowned throughout the valley. The handsomest and most accomplished of this class are now to be found pursuing not immaculate life at Lahore and other towns of Punjab, rather than at Srinagar. Wakefield maintained that the *Watals* are said to be the descendants of the aboriginal inhabitants of the country before the advent of the Aryans. It is mentioned that they are different from the rest of the

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8 The Hindu community of present day Kashmir mainly consists of Brahman caste. There are a few other castes but they immigrated into Kashmir form other parts of the Northern India during the Sikh and the Dogra rule, see also Lawrence, the Valley of Kashmir, p 302.

9 Jonaraja, *Rajtarangni*, trans. J.C Dutt, (Calcutta, 1898), pp. 13-18; see also Nizam-ud-din Wani, p. 188.

10 Census Report, 1901, pp. 82-83.

11 Srivara*, Zaina Rajtarangni*, (New Delhi,1994), p. 153.

12 Kalhana, *Rajtarangni*, Eng. Treans., M. A Stein, Vol. II, London, 1900, p. 182.

13 Kapoor, M.L., op. cit., p. 215.

14 Srivara*, Zaina Rajtarangni*, p. 58; see also, Nizamud din Wani, p. 189.

inhabitants, who hold them in the greatest contempt and have rather the manners and appearance of that ubiquitous tribe, the gipsy. [15]

The fact that the muslim missionaries strove to wash off the social stigma of the low castes is also borne out by the distinguished Krams (Surnames), which these low castes received at the hands of the muslim preachers or which were assumed by them after their conversion. It is significant to mention here that all the erstwhile out castes of Kashmir-Dombas, Chandalas, Watals, Kiratas (fishermen), Aramikas (vegetable gardeners), butchers etc. are having such dignified krams as Shaikh, Ganai, Mir, Dar, Sufi etc. Shaikh means Great, Ganai stands for the man of letters, Mir denotes leader and Sufi is a direct adoption of the generic term used for the muslim mystics. That after conversion the lower castes felt socially elevated can also be gauged by the fact that they assumed the surname Dar- the Kram of a prestigious noble family of the day.[16]

It was religion that was advocating abroad that piety not caste or profession determines ones greatness. So it was at that time that not a single low caste showed unwillingness to enter into the fold of Islam. The best example of this kind is given to the highly exalted position given to ShaikNur al Din, a Domba by caste, by the leading muslim preachers and sufis of the time. Though according to the ulema there were marked deviations from the Shariah in the life pattern of the Shaikh, the religious luminaries, however ignored them seeing the spiritual personality par excellence of the Shaikh.[17]

The *Camaras*, who came to Kashmir in the time of the Sultans, performed the work of taking out the hides of dead animals. The Shapherds of the valley were known as *Chaupans* and performed distinct group, but they intermarried with the *Galwans*. Slavery did not prevail on a large scale in medieval Kashmir.[18]

There is however another class which deserve a few words whom visitors to the valley come most in contact. Wakefield here refers to the *Hanji,* or boatmen. They had a hard work of towing and paddling the boats, which is their means of earning of livelihood. The boats also form their homes, for the greater part of them, pass their lives entirely on board and know no other dwelling place. They were earlier known as *Dhivar* or *Kooryian* and formed an important class in the socio-economic life of Kashmir since time immemorial.[19]

About the Shamshis both AbulFazl and Mirza Haider Dughlat had mentioned them as sun worshippers. It was a class of Hindu community in the time of Chaks. They believed that as long as sun was visible their actions were visible to it and nothing but uprightness was lawful, but when night fell it did not see them or know them. They were orthodox people and without any political influence.[20]

Royal and High Castes: In medieval Kashmir the nobility consisted of all the highest administrative officials after king and his royal family. It was the most previlidged class and constituted the upper class of the Kashmiri society. The title of Khan was generally conferred upon the Princes. So far as the rule of Chaks was concerned the nobility was not a homogenous body but were drawn from various social groupsviz

15 Ibid., p. 105.

16 Wani, Mohammad Ashraf, *Islam in Kashmir (Fourteenth to Sixteenth century),* (Srinagar, 2004), pp. 190-191.

17 Ibid., p.192.

18 Hassan, Muhibul, *Kashmir Under Sultans*, op. cit., p. 366.

19 Wakefield, W., *History of Kashmir and Kashmiris*, p. 103.

20 Dughlat, Mirza Haider, *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, Eng. Trans. Ross and Elias**, (**London, 1895), p 184.

Sayyids, Dars, Maliks, Lones, Rainas[21], Bhats, Kokas, Dunis and Najis. Among the prominent castes who were holding power the only group debarred from holding high posts of the nobility was the *Magres* who had been the potential rivals of the Chaks during their struggle for power in Kashmir. It has been described that the nobles were a heterogonous body composed of all sort of local and foreigners, whose character and number varied with every ruling king. The chaks migrated to Kashmir from Dardistan in the reign of Suhadeva. The sultans and other members of the royal family married within the families of nobles, particularly Baihaqi Sayyids, Chaks and Magres. Due to political considerations they entered into matrimonial alliances with the rulers of Madra, Kishtiwar, Rajouri, Pakhli, and Sindh. The nobles married among themselves.[22] We have already seen how one of these families, the Chaks or Warrior class, assumed in former days regal powers but of later years they degenerated into three banditti, and were hunted down so mercifully that few remained. Those who were left are now known by the appellation of galwans or horse keepers. [23]

Among the various social groups of Kashmir, the Sayyids[24] had come to Kashmir from central Asia and Persia much before the establishment of Chak rule. With the passage of time they increasingly received the royal patronage and finally settled down in Kashmir.[25]

The family of Dars originally constituted the traditional landed aristocracy. The term Dar is derived from the word Damaras, denoting the territorial lord. The damras played an important political role during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Under the muslim rulers they also continued to play a dominant role under the caste name of *Dar* (damra).[26] Malik was a title of honour and distinction granted for loyalty and soldierly qualities. They were imported into Kashmir polity from the Delhi sultanate. In Kashmir the title of Malik came into use like the term Shah, Sultan, Sillah and Khan. The distinguished members of four political group-Magres, Dars, Rainas and Chaks received the title of Malik from the reigning sultan of Shahmir dynasty.[27]

In course of time, the title became hereditary and was adopted even as a surname. *Lones* originally known as *Lavanyas*, were a turbulent agriculturist class in ancient Kashmir. They had been the constant source of menace to the king and people. Their growing strength was finally crushed by Rinchina, and with the passage of time they got merged with the peasantry of the country retaining "*Lon*" as their original sub caste. Under Shahmir they retained their political and economic strength. [28]

Rainas were originally a group of Brahmin having good political and social status. Under the muslim rulers a large section of them were converted to Islam but they continued to be known as Raina by their caste. They also received the title of *Malik* from the muslim rulers which they associated with their name.[29] *Bhats* were also the descendants of Brahmins. They assumed considerable political importance under

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21 There were two groups of the Rainas, firstly those Brahmans who call themselves Razdan and the second those Rajputs who claim descent from the Rajas of Chandra Bansi and who came to Kashmir from Nagarkot in the reign of Raja Jayasimha.

22 Wani,Nizamud din, op. cit., p. 190; see also M. L Kapoor, op. cit., p. 210.

23 Wakefield, W., *History of Kashmir and Kashmiris*, (1975, New Delhi), p. 102.

24 The *Sayyid* families which had taken to agriculture were regarded as superior by the villagers.

25 Azim, Muhammad, *Waqiat-i-Kashmir*, Trans. Munshi Ashraf Ali, (Delhi, 1845), p 82.

26 Wani, Nizamud din, op. cit., p 190.

27 Barni, *Tarikh-i-Firozshahi*, (Calcutta, 1967), pp. 145-220.

28 Kalhana, *Rajtarangni*, Vol. II, p 171.

29 Wani, Nizamud din, op. cit., p. 191.

the muslim rulers. Like the *Rainas*, they also continued to be known by their caste name even after their conversion to Islam.[30]

Kokas as mentioned by Stein is *Khakhas* and *Khashas* by Kalhana. Like the Chaks they were marauders and turbulent. Stein writes that they maintained their forefathers' reputation until recent times in Kashmir. The Chaks inducted them into the nobility. They continued to be called by their tribal name *Kokas* even after their conversion to Islam. [31]About "*Dunis*" and "*Najis*" much details are not available except that under the muslim rulers they participated in political activities and had achance to share power with other nobles.

"*Magres*" who were the most potential rival of Chaks, played a very mischievous role against them. They did not originally belong to any particular tribe, unlike the Chaks. *Magre* was the corruption of a Sanskrit word "*Margesha*" meaning the guardian of passes, under the muslim rulers the official designation for the guardian of the passes was "*Nayak*" which later became caste-name. [32]

During the period of *Sultans*, an important social group entered into Kashmir and they were none other than *Sayyids* and nobles from Persia and Central Asia who were received with respect at the court. They were granted *Jagirs* and Subsidies and enjoyed privileges and power. There were some frequent civil wars and family feuds due to sharp cleavage among the two sections of the nobility.[33]

Influential Castes: Under political and military pressures of the Monghols and Timur in Persia and Central Asia, they came to Kashmir attracted by the magnificence of Sultans of Kashmir. The *Sayyids* poured into Kashmir in different groups. They occupied important positions in the valley while some tookto the profession of teaching, some were appointed as *Qazis* and *Mufties*. Many of them were men of piety and supplied recruits to the ranks of *Pirs* and *Murshids* were acted as missionaries and spiritual preceptors of the ignorant masses. There were still others like *Baihaqi Sayyids*, who joined politics and entered into matrimonial alliances with the Kings and nobles of Kashmir.[34]

According to Lawrence the *Sayyids* stood first in the hierarchy of Kashmir. One striking feature of *Baihaqi Sayyids* was that they had grown politically influential under the Chaks, yet they did not give up their life of piety and austerity as the fundamental religious duty. The Pirzadas are said to be the decendants of Sayyids, saints and of Makhdumsahib.[35]Formerly the Pirzadas held the land which was cultivated for them by the Kashmiris, but now the villagers decline to work for their spiritual leaders, and the Pirzadas had either to exert themselves or be thrown on the charity of their followers.[36]

Makhdumsahib is always described as a Sheik, that is a convert from Hinduism, and he is said to have been descended from a Rajput family of Nagarkot. He was a follower of Sheikh Sahab-ul-Din Saharwardi of Baghdad, and was born in Kashmir.[37]

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30 Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 306.

31 Kalhana, *Rajtarangni*, Vol. II, p. 430.

32 Wani, Nizamud din, op. cit., p. 192; see also Waqiat-i-Kashmir, pp. 84-86.

33 Bamzai P N K., *A History of Kashmir*, 468.

34 Wani, Nizamud din, p. 196.

35 Lawrence, Walter R., *The Valley of Kashmir*, (Srinagar, 2005), p 291.

36 Lawrence, Walter R., *The Valley of Kashmir*, p. 291.

37 Ibid., p. 292.

It has been mentioned that *Pir*[38] with their *Murids* formed an important group in medieval Kashmir, and exercised greater influence on the social, religious and cultural life of the country than the *ulema*. They were looked upon with great reverence by all classes of the people because of their greater learning and piety, but above all because they were supposed to possess miraculous powers. It was thus the Shaikh or the Pir, according to the Sufi orders, regulated and guided the spiritual and moral conduct of his disciple and expected in return complete obedience to his teachings. The *Pir* lived in the *Khanqah*[39] (the organization of the *Khanqahs* in Kashmir was the same as in India, Persia and Turkistan), built and endowed for him by the princes and nobles. When the *Pir* died he was succeeded by a *Khalifa* who stood high among the disciples of his moral, intellectual and spiritual qualities.[40]

Zamindars also formed a substantial portion of the population of Kashmir. The term cultivator has been disfigured as Zamindars by the Persian Chroniclers. These Zamindars were holders of a piece of land under their own cultivation and malikiat. Bahristani Shahi mentions about Zamindars of various regions.[41]

The *Sufis* formed another religious group in medieval Kashmir, which exercised considerable influence on the social, religious and cultural life of people. The muslim mystics or *sufis* were men of deep religious fervour, who led an ascetic life with much emphasis on simplicity and self discipline in their efforts to be in communication with God.[42]The *sufis* were devoted muslims who moved within the limits of *Shariat* (Law of Islam) and believed it as the way to salvation. The beginning of the sufistic tradition should be traced in Kashmir to the early muslim influences from outside. In Kashmir we see different orders (*Silsilahs*) like *Suhrawardi*, *Kubraviya*, *Qadriya*, *Naqashbandiya* and those of *Nurbakhshiya* and *Rishis*[43] by the time of the Chaks[44]. Sufis played a significant role in spreading Islam in Kashmir. They were the reformers and always raised voice against the injustice.[45]Jahangir writes that there is a body of Faqirs, whom the Kashmiri calls Rishi. It is further said that in Kashmir Sherkot was the abode of Rishis. These Rishis are themselves agriculturalists engage themselves either in sowing grains or planting fruit trees.[46]

The tribal people of Chitral, Yasin, Gilgit, Chillas, Buji and the Kishanganga of North and North-West of Kashmir are known as *Dards*. Kalhana and Srivara has mentioned their existence in the valley and there is a village in the capital by the name of Dards. *Bahristan-i-Shahi* also mentions about Kokal Tash tribe inhabiting the frontier province of Naushehra.[47]

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38 *Pir* is the religious guru, and murid the disciple and the concept of *Pir –Murid* has been highly praised by several writers. The disciple looked upon his pir as the deputy of God and regarded absolute submission to him as essential.

39 In the *Khanqah* of Zadibal, the professional followers lived with their families, and were supported by the income of endowments.

40 Hassan, Muhibul, *Kashmir Under Sultans*, (Srinagar, 2002), pp. 361-362; see also Kapoor, M. L., p. 213.

41 Kalhana, *Rajtarangni*, Vol. II, pp. 430 32, see also Nizamud din Wani, p. 197.

42 Dughlat, Mirza Haider, *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, p. 436.

43 Rishi is a Sanskrit word meaning a saint, a sage or an ascetic. According to local tradition of a legendary character, the founder of this order is supposed to be Khwaja Uways, Prophet Mohammad's contemporary who lived in Yemen. (Knowles, A Dctionary of Kashmiri proverbs and sayings, p. 23).

44 *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, II, p 149.

45 Abul Fazl, *Ain-i-Akbari,* Trans. Colonel H.S Jarrett, vol. III, p. 198.

46 *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, II, p 149.

47 Kalhana, *Rajtarangni*, Vol. II, pp. 430- 36, see also Wani, Nizamud din, op. cit., pp. 203-204.

Along with feudal landlordism, there grew up religious class among the muslim population. The most respected and influential among these classes were the *ulema*, who as doctors of Islamic law and interpreters of religious dogma, were universally respected by the followers of Islam. They functioned as *Qazis*, *Muftis* and *Sheikh-ul-Islam*. Most of the *Ulema* come from Persia and Central Asia but soon Kashmiri scholars acquired sufficient mastery over the subject to be able to perform the duties of these offices. [48]

AbulFazl writes in *Ain-i-Akbari*, that the Hindus were known by the name of *Bhatts* and they were chiefly concentrated at Srinagar, Vihi. MattanIcch, Nagam, Inderkot, Pattan and Telgam. The muslim majority were sunnis dominantly were seen at Dacchinpara, Zainagir and Pattan. There were many sub-castes among them like *Khamash, shawl, Sihar, Bakre, Sansi, Duni and Chaks*. We have seen hill tribes also like *Thakore* and *Nayak*. [49]

There were two sects of Muslims in the valley i.e., Shias and Sunnis. The Sunnis formed the majority of the population of the valley and were the main local converts to Islam[50] popularly called the Shaikhs were divided into three different caste, first the *Pirzadas* who were the descendants of Fakirs (holy medicants), second *Baba Zadas* who were the descendants of the Khalifas of the *Makhdum Sahab*and the *Wains*, the original Mohammadans of the Srinagar city formed the third and were considered the purest and of the best descent.[51] The other Mohammadans of Kashmir were Shawl weavers (Khandawav), embroiderers and Zamindars of the villages. Those who knew Arabic were in addition to their names styled as *Mullah*, *Vaiz* and *Maulvi*.[52]

The people who came from outside the valley were *Sayyids* who came into Kashmir during Mohammadan rule and traced their lineage to the Khilafas. The *Nughals* were the immigrants from Khurasan and Turkistan. Of the latter there were a few sub divisions, i.e., *Mirs-Mir* being only an abbreviation of *Mirza*. They were agriculturalists. The distinguishes mark in the case of the former was the word Mir being affixed while that of the latter prefixed to the name of the person. *Beig*- the community held high position in the reign of the Chagtai rulers of Kashmir. *Ashai*- the immigrants from the village Asawar in Khurasan. *Ashai* being only a corruption of *Ashawari*. *Bande*-literally a prisoner, being a section of Mughals who, on coming refactory were put in prison. Bachh- the survivors of a Mughal family to whom village Bachhpura was given in *Jagir*. *Ganai*– the word being a corruption of *Gurgani* meaning immigrants from Gurganin Turkistan. *Kanth*-the progeny of one Khawaja Husain who was in charge of the construction of the fort buildings by Akbar.[53]

Apart from castes arising from birth, there were castes based on trade, occupation or habit of the people. The peculiar affix to a persons name, indicated the origin of the caste as far instance, Aziz *Khar*, the *Khar* referring to the occupation of blacksmith, sobhan*Chhan* or carpenter, rahman *Wage* or milkman, Kabir *Wain* or shopkeeper, Asad *Pohal* or Shepherd, Ramzan *Kakapura* i.e., from Kakapura, the name of Ancestral home, and so on.[54]

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48 See *Waqiat-I Kashmir,* pp. 84-86; Bamzai, P N K., *History of Kashmir, p.* 467.

49 Ibid., p. 469.

50 Bates, *Gazetter*, (New Delhi, 1980), p. 32.

51 Census Report, 1891, p. 142.

52 Census Report, 1911, pp. 204-205.

53 Census Report, 1891, p. 142.

54 Bamzai, P N K., *Socio-Economic History of Kashmir*, (New Delhi, 1987), p. 313.

In Kashmir there were a huge number of Krams like prestigious krams, religious krams, secular Krams, occupational krams, traditional krams and lower class krams. They are:

Retention of Prestigious Traditional Krams: *Bhat, Dar, Magre, Chak, Raina, Parray, Loan, Tantray, Rather, Thakur, Dangar, Padar, Kuchay, Pandit, Tak,* etc

Newly Introduced Krams: *Krams with Religious Background: Shaikh, Suharwardi, Hamdani, Kubravi, Chisti, Qadri, Naqashbandi, Makhdumi, Simnani, Kashani, Gilani, Madani, Mantaqi, Qurashi, Alvi, Rafai, Kamli, Nazki, Yazdani, Sarafi, Nahvi, Mufti, Khatib, Rizvi, Balki, Bukhari, Baihaqi, Andrabi, Sherazi, Jilani, Masoodi, Jami, Rafiqi, Mufti, Qazi, Akhun, Pir, Mulla, Baba, Shah, etc.*

Secular Krams: *Mirza, Ganai, Baigh, Mughal, Koka, Shahmiri, Jan, Mir, Khan, Banday.*

Occupational Krams: *Chikin* (Embrioder), *Sheshagar* (Mirror maker), *JildSaz* (book binder), *Kaghaz Saz* (Paper manufacturer), *Khattat* (Caligraphist), *QalinBaf* (Carpet maker), *Shawlbaf* (shawl maker), *Allaqaband* (braider), *Hakkak* (lapidary), *Roshangar* (polisher), *Naqqash* (painter), *Naqati* (Dot maker), *Zargar* (gold smith), *Sazagar* (equalizer), *Shanagar* (maker of shawl weavers loom), *Sekhgar*, (maker of skews), *Ranggar* (Dyer), *Rafugar* (fine drawer), *Hakim* (Doctor), *Suhaf* (book binder),*Chettagar*(maker of chintz), *Kozagar*(cup maker), *Zaz* (maker of musical instruments) *Jalakdoz* (embroider), etc.

Persianization of Traditional Occupational Krams: *Zargar* (Gold smith), *Hajjam* (Barbar), *Nanwai* (Baker), *Najjar* (carpenter), *Ahangar* (blacksmith) etc.

Shared Krams between Muslims and Hindus: *Bhatt, Dar, Raina , Kaul, Pandit, Handoo, Matoo, Nath, Waid, Chalkoo, Malla, Jalali, Zadu, Draboo, Jalla, Wangnoo, Zaroo, Kalu, Kaw, Kak, Lattoo, Safaya, Kakru, Tang, Wanchu, Bungroo, Bazaz, Balu*etc.

Occupational Krams of Kashmiri Pundits: *Razdan, Fotadar, Ambardar, Jalali, Waguzari, Qazi, Muhatasib, Sahib, Sultan, Zamindar, Ganju, Sazawul, Karawani, Naqib, Diwani, Khazanchi, Amin, etc*[55]

To conclude we can say that castes in Kashmir evolved from ancient period and got enriched with the passage of time. The composite culture of Kashmir developed due to the influx of various socio religious groups in the valley. There was an amalgamation of local and foreign castes. The castes were so fascinating that some people use them as titles. From the caste of a king down to the caste of a common man, every caste was quite interesting and carried some weight.

[55] Stein, M.A., Kalhanas Rajtarangni, Vol. II, pp 304-308.

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